

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 04278 01 OF 02 251330Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 NEAE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 AID-05 /088 W
-----251512Z 101622 /45

O 251143Z MAR 77
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2147
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 NEW DELHI 4278

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT IN
SUBJECT: CRACKS IN RULING FRONT FOLLOWING MORARJI DESAI'S ELECTION

REF: NEW DELHI 4014

SUMMARY: MORARJI DESAI'S ELECTION MARCH 24 AS JANATA
PARLIAMENTARY LEADER (AND THUS AS PRIME MINISTER) HAS
TOUCHED OFF A SMALL TEMPEST BETWEEN THE JANATA PARTY
AND JAGJIVAN RAM'S CFD. EVEN IF RAM COULD NOT HAVE
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 04278 01 OF 02 251330Z

EXPECTED TO RECEIVE THE TOP JOB HIMSELF, HE AND HIS
COLLEAGUES, AND SOME JANATA MP'S AS WELL, WERE ANGERED
BY THE "QUESTIONABLE METHOD" BY WHICH DESAI WAS "ELECTED":
IN EFFECT, DESAI WAS APPOINTED BY ELDER STATESMEN
J.P. NARAYAN AND ACHARYA KRIPALANI. THE UPSHOT HAS
BEEN THAT CFD MP'S REFUSED TO ATTEND THE GATHERING
OF JANATA MP'S AT WHICH DESAI'S SELECTION WAS ANNOUNCED,

AND RAM WAS NOT PRESENT AT THE SWEARING-IN CREMONY. LATER ON MARCH 24, RAM ANNOUNCED THAT THE CFD WOULD NOT MERGE WITH THE JANATA, WOULD SIT SEPARATELY FROM THE JANATA MP'S IN THE LOK SABHA, BUT WOULD SUPPORT THE JANATA CONSISTENT WITH THE PARTY'S ELECTION MANIFESTO. CFD LEADERS ARE DESCRIBED AS SOUR AND OUTRAGED, URGENT EFFORTS HAVE BEEN UNDER WAY SINCE LAST NIGHT TO SOOTHE RAM'S RUFFLED FEATHERS AND TO APPEASE HIS AMBITIOUS LIEUTENENT, H. N. BAHUGUNA. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIRST MEMBERS OF DESAI'S CABINET IS BEING HELD UP UNTIL THE ISSUE OF CFD PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT IS CLARIFIED. EMBASSY HAS LEARNED THAT APPEALS FROM DESAI, J. P. AND OTHERS MAY BE SUCCEEDING AND THE RAM MAY AGREE TO A RECONCILIATION GIVING HIM THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERSHIP. HOWEVER, THIS TUSSLE SORTS ITSELF OUT, IT IS LIKELY TO PRESAGE FURTHER DISPUTES AMONG THE HETEROGENEOUS COMPONENTS OF THE RULING FRONT AND EVEN WITHIN THE JANATA ITSELF. FOR THE MOMENT, WE CAN FORESEE A SITUATION REMARKABLY PARALLEL TO THE CONDUCT OF COALITION GOVERNMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE, WHERE VOTE TRADING AND CAREFUL BALANCING ACTS ARE THE NORM. END SUMMARY.

1. THE MAJOR TOPIC OF SPECULATION FOLLOWING CONGRESS' DEFEAT AND MRS. GANDHI'S RESIGNATION FOCUSED ON WHETHER JANATA AND THE CFD WOULD JOINTLY ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT AND ELECT A SINGLE LEADER. THE PRO'S AND CON'S OF THE TWO PRIME CANDIDATES FOR PRIME MINISTER, MORARJI DESAI AND JAGJIVAN RAM, HAVE BEEN ENDLESSLY DEBATED BY POLITICAL OBSERVERS. CHARAN SINGH'S LAST MINUTE BID FOR THE TOP JOB
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 04278 01 OF 02 251330Z

FURTHER MUDDIED THE WATERS. WHILE JANATA SPOKESMEN, INCLUDING PARTY CHAIRMAN DESAI, HAVE BEEN INSISTING THAT THERE WOULD BE "ONE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP, WITH ONE IDEOLOGY AND ONE LEADER", THE CFD LEADERSHIP HAS BEEN MORE EVASIVE: RAM HAS REPEATEDLY DUCKED QUESTIONS ON THIS MATTER FOR THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS.

2. MATTERS APPARENTLY CAME TO A HEAD ON THE EVENING OF MARCH 23 WHEN J.P. NARAYAN AND ACHARYA KRIPALANI INJECTED THEMSELVES INTO THE NEGOTIATIONS. RAM, APPARENTLY UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT A JOINT PARLIAMENTARY PARTY LEADER WOULD BE ELECTED BY ALL JANATA, CFD AND AKALI DAL MP'S, HAD INDICATED TO DESAI THAT HE WAS AMENABLE TO THE EVENTUAL MERGER OF THE CFD INTO THE JANATA. SOMETIME EARLY ON MARCH 24, HOWEVER, IT APPEARS THAT SOME JANATA LEADERS CONVEYED TO J.P. WHAT THEY CLAIMED WAS THE MAJORITY VIEW WITHIN THE PARTY. JANATA MP'S THEN AUTHORIZED NARAYAN AND KRIPALANI TO MAKE THE FINAL CHOICE, AND THEY OPTED FOR DESAI. JANATA AND CFD MP'S WERE SUMMONED TO THE

CENTRAL HALL OF PARLIAMENT AT MID-DAY MARCH 24, WHERE KRIPALANI ANNOUNCED DESAI'S ELECTION TO THUNDEROUS APPLAUSE. MEANWHILE, RAM HAD HEARD OF THE DECISION AND ATTEMPTED TO SEE NARAYAN, WHO HAD ALREADY LEFT FOR THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE GATHERING. RAM QUICKLY WROTE A LETTER TO DESAI WITHDRAWING HIS EARLIER OFFER OF EVENTUAL CFD MERGER WITH JANATA BECAUSE THE "EXPECTATION OF USING DEMOCRATIC NORMS HAS BEEN BELIED". HE AND OTHER CFD LEADERS DID NOT ATTEND THE PARLIAMENT HOUSE GATHERING AND, ACCORDING TO NEWS REPORTS THOSE CFD MP'S WHO WERE PRESENT QUICKLY LEFT WHEN THEY LEARNED OF KRIPALANI'S IMPENDING ANNOUNCEMENT. RAM WAS ALSO ABSENT FROM DESAI'S SWEARING-IN CEREMONY AT RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

3. "INDIAN EXPRESS" SENIOR CORRESPONDENT KULDIP NAYAR WROTE IN THIS MORNING'S EDITION THAT THE CONSENSUS APPROACH IN ELECTING THE PM APPARENTLY BROKE DOWN WHEN CHARAN SINGH INDICATED

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 NEW DE 04278 01 OF 02 251330Z

TO J.P. NARAYAN THAT THE BLD CONTINGENT IN JANATA (SOME 65 MP'S ACCORDING TO NAYAR) OPPOSED RAM AS PARLIAMENTARY LEADER. SOME CPM MP'S, ALTHOUGH NOT PARTICIPANTS IN THE PROCESS, HAD ALSO INDICATED THEIR OPPOSITION TO RAM DUE TO HIS ASSOCIATION WITH THE EMERGENCY. AT THE SAME TIME, ACCORDING TO NAYAR, THE AKALIS, CONGRESS (O) MANY JAN SANGH AND OTHER MP'S WERE THOUGH TO FAVOR DESAI. NARAYAN AND KRIPALANI DECIDED NOT TO WASTE TIME AND SELECTED DESAI.

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NEW DE 04278 02 OF 02 251435Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-07 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 TRSE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00
INRE-00 NEAE-00 OMB-01 IO-13 AID-05 /088 W
-----251511Z 102518 /40

O 251143Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2148

INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
CINCPAC
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMCONSUL MADRAS
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 NEW DELHI 4278

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

THE REVERBERATIONS WERE SWIFT: RAM TOLD NEWSMEN LATER ON MARCH 24 THAT THE CFD WOULD REMAIN A SEPARATE ORGANIZATION AND THAT ITS MP'S WOULD SIT SEPARATELY FROM THE JANATA IN THE LOK SABHA. HOWEVER, THE CFD WILL SUPPORT THE JANATA CONSISTENT WITH ITS ELECTION MANIFESTO. (A CFD RAJYA SABHA MEMBER CONFIRMED THIS PUBLIC POSITON IN A CALL ON THE CHARGE MARCH 25.) CORRESPONDENTS AT RAM'S HOUSE DESCRIBED THE MOOD AS SOUR AND OBSERVED THAT CFD GENERAL SECRETARY BAHUGUNA APPEARED "OUTRAGED". CFD SUPPORTERS GATHERED AT RAM'S HOUSE SHOUTING ANTI-JANATA SLOGANS. UNHAPPINESS
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NEW DE 04278 02 OF 02 251435Z

OVER THE SELECTION PROCESS EVEN SURFACED WITHIN THE JANATA RANKS. CONGRESS PARTY REBEL RAM DHAN, A NEWLY LELCTED MP, WUICKLY RESIGNED AS A SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE JANATA PARTY BECAUSE THE LEADERSHIP ISSUE "WAS DECIDED IN THE DICTATORIAL STYLE OF THE CONGRESS". GEORGE FERNANDES ALSO EXPRESSED HIS DISMAY, AND TOLD REPORTERS THAT OTHER JANATA MP'S FELT SIMILARLY.

5. EFFORTS SWIFTLY GOT UNDERWAY AND CONTINUED THROUGH THE NIGHT TO SOOTHE RAM'S RUFFLED FEATHERS AND PATCH UP THE SUDEN CRACKS IN THE JANATA/CFD FRONT. JANATA LEADERS, INCLUDING A.B. VAJPAYEE, BIJU PATNAIK AND MOHN DHARIA, RUSHED TO RAM'S HOUSE TO PERSUADE HIM TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNMENT. THEY REPORTEDLY OFFERED HIM THE DEPUTY PRIME MINISTERSHIP WITH TWO OR THREE PORTFOLIOS. IN A MEETING WITH J.P. LATER LAST NIGHT, RAM WAS DESCRIBED AS ADAMANT.

6. FOR THE MOMENT, THE JANATA AND CFD ARE TRYING TO MAINTAIN A FACADE OF HARMONY: MP'S OF BOTH PARTIES HAD ATTENDED THE PLEDGE-TAKING CEREMONY AT RAJGHAT EARLY ON THE MORNING OF MARCH 24 (THIS WAS EFORE THE LEADERSHIP ISSUE WAS RESOLVED),

AND RAM ADDRESSED THE JANATA VICTORY RALLY AT THE RAMILA GROUNDS ALONG WITH DESAI AND VAJPAYEE IN THE LATE AFTERNOON. RAM ALSO SENT A MESSAGE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO DESAI ON HIS ASSUMPTION OF OFFICE.

7. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE FIRST MEMBERS OF DESAI'S CABINET IS APPARENTLY BEING DELAYED UNTIL THE QUESTION OF CFD PARTICIPATION IN THE GOVERNMENT IS CLARIFIED. JANATA LEADERS, J.P. NARAYAN AND EVEN THE IMAN OF THE JAMA MASJID HAVE BEEN APPEALING TO RAM TO RECONCILE HIMSELF TO THE SITUATION. A JOURNALIST WHO HAS JUST COME FROM RAM'S HOUSE TELLS US THAT THE CURRENT SPECULATION IS THAT THESE APPEALS ARE HAVING EFFECT AND THAT RAM AND EVEN BAHUGUNA WILL AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE GOVERNMENT, WITH RAM AS DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER ACCORDING TO LATEST RUMORS.
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NEW DE 04278 02 OF 02 251435Z

8. COMMENT: MANY OBSERVERS BELIEVE THAT MORARJI WAS THE LOGICAL (AND PERHAPS ONLY) CHOICE FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP: IT IS HIS JANATA PARTY, RATHER THKMAN RAM'S CFD, WHICH CONTROLS THE BULK OF LOK SABHA SEATS (ALMOST A CLEAR MAJORITY IN FACT). TO GIVE THE JOB TO THE LEADER OF A SMALL BLOC (ONLY 28 SEATS) WOULD HAVE AROUSED RESENTMENT IN JANATA RANKS AND THREATENED THE STABILITY OF THE RULING FRONT. IN ADDITION, DESAI IS OLDER THAN RAM, HAS ALWAYS BEEN SENIOR TO HIM IN THE CABINETS IN WHICH THEY HAVE SERVED TOGETHER, AND HAS A CLEAR RECORD (INCLUDING 18 MONTHS OF IMPRISONMENT) OF OPPOSITION TO MRS. GANDHI'S REGIME CONTRASTED WITH RAM'S RECENT JUMP. MOREOVER, RAM'S ASSOCIATION WITH THE EMERGENCY TO THE MOMENT OF HIS ELEVENTH-HOUR DEFECTION, WHICH SOME VIEW AS OPPORTUNISM IN ITS WORST FORM, TARNISHES HIS IMAGE SOMEWHAT.

9. EVEN IF HE HAD NOT SERIOUSLY EXPECTED TO GET THE TOP JOB, RAM MAY BE GENUINELY UNHAPPY OVER THE "QUESTIONABLE METHOD" BY WHICH DESAI WAS "ELECTED". HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THAT THE PRIME MOVER BEHIND RAM'S PRESENT STANCE WAS HIS AMBITIOUS DEPUTY, H.N. BAHUGUNA, THE MAN WHO IS WIDELY REGARDED AS HAVING INFLUENCED RAM TO DEFECT IN THE FIRST PLACE. THE GENERAL BELIEF IS THAT LEFT TO HIMSELF, RAM WOULD HAVE ACCEPTED THE NUMBER TWO POSTITION WITHOUT MUCH HESITATION. BAHUGUNA MAY BE PRODDING RAM INTO HIS ADAMANT POSTURE IN THE GOVERNMENT. (WE HAD LEARNED SOME WEEKS AGO THAT BAHUGUNA'S ULTIMATE STRATEGY WAS TO PROVOKE DISSENSIONS IN JANATA/CFD RANKS AFTER THE ELECTION TO THE POINT WHERE HE COULD OFFER HIMSELF AS A COMPROMISE PRIME MINISTER.)

10. WHATEVER THE FINAL OUTCOME OF THIS FIRST TUSSLE, IT IS

LIKELY TO PRESAGE FURTHER DISPUTES AMONG THE COMPONENTS OF
THE RULING FRONT AND EVEN WITHIN THE JANATA ITSELF. AS
WE HAVE POINTED OUT ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS, THE JANATA IS A
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 NEW DE 04278 02 OF 02 251435Z

MIXED ASSORTMENT OF MARXIST SOCIALISTS, SMALL FARMERS,
BUSINESSMEN, HINDU NATIONALISTS AND GANDHIAN
SOCIALISTS (SYMBOLIZED BY MORARJI DESAI), WHILE THE
CFD (ASIDE FROM RAM) HAS A HEAVY DOSE OF EX-CONGRESS LEFTISTS.
THE AKALI DAO FAVORS GREATER AUTONOMY FOR THE STATES.
ALTHOUGH IT WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE RULING FRONT,
THE STRONGLY MARXIST CPM HAS INDICATED ITS INTENTION TO
SUPPORT THE GOVERNMENT ON SELECTED ISSUES. IN ADDITION,
BOTH THE JANATA AND ITS ALLIES HAVE STRONG PERSONALITIES
WHOSE PENCHANT FOR MUTUAL ANTAGONISM IN THE PAST WAS ONLY
MUTED IN THE FACE OF FIGHTING THE ELECTIONS. WITH THE
SPOILS OF VICTORY NOW THEIRS, THE POTENTIAL FOR INFIGHTING
SEEMS SURE TO INCREASE. ATOP THIS HETEROGENEOUS RULING
EDIFICE STANDS MORARJI DESAI, A HIGHLY-PRINCIPLED, STRONG-
WILLED AND UNCOMPROMISING LEADER. OBSERVERS SAY THAT HE
MELLOWED DURING HIS CONFINEMENT. TIME WILL TELL.
FOR THE MOMENT WE CAN FORESEE A
SITUATION REMARKABLY PARALLEL TO THE CONDUCT OF COALITION
GOVERNMENTS IN THE LESS STABLE WEST EUROPEAN DEMOCRACIES,
WHERE TOUGH VOTE TRADING AND CAREFUL BALANCING
ACTS ARE NORMS.
SCHNEIDER

CONFIDENTIAL

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PARTY DISSENSION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 25-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977NEWDE04278
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770103-0113
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770322/aaaaasmp.tel
Line Count: 309
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 1138d0b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 6
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 NEW DELHI 4014
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Nov-2004 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2996927
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CRACKS IN RULING FRONT FOLLOWING MORARJI DESAI'S ELECTION
TAGS: PINT, IN, JANATA PARTY, (DESAI, MORARJI)
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/1138d0b1-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009